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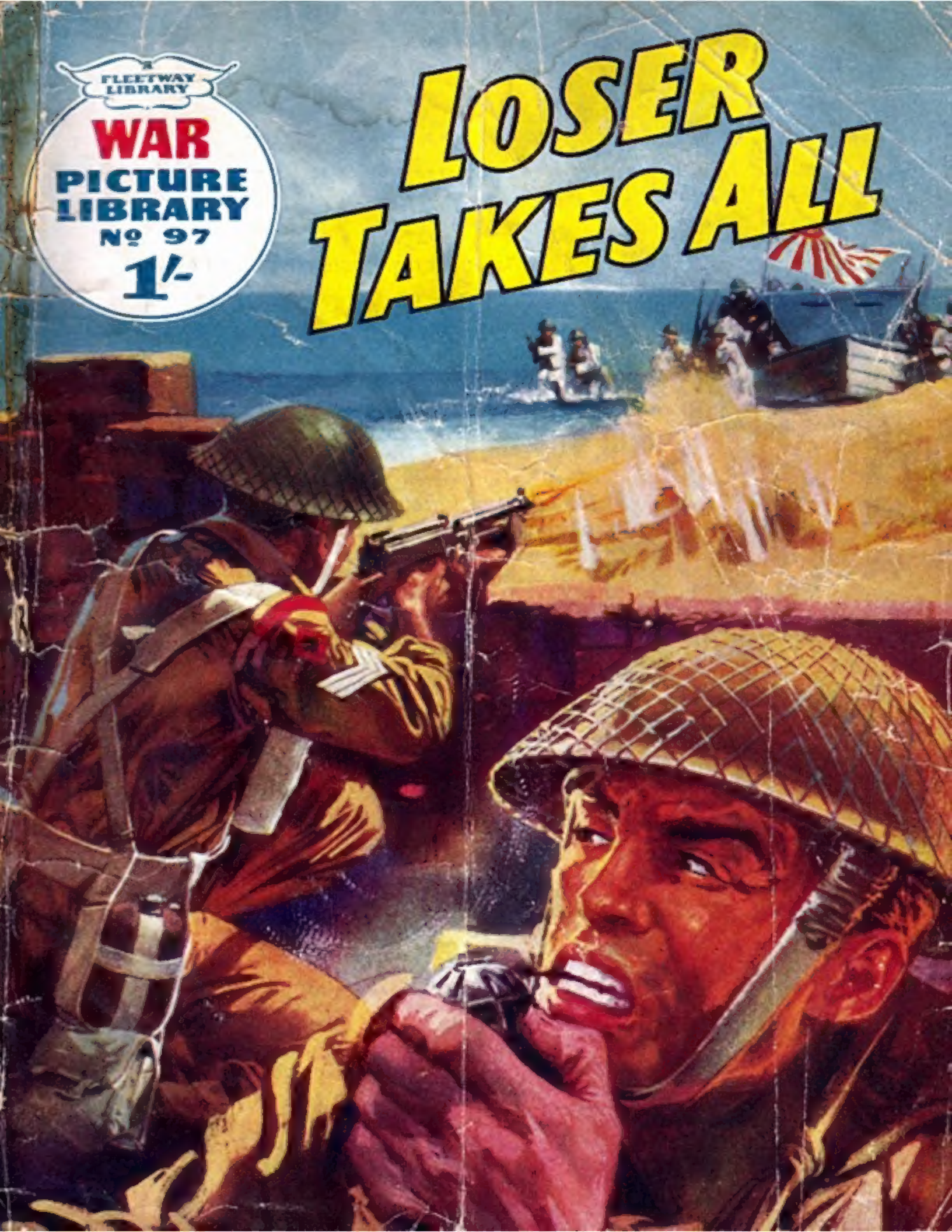
# LOSER TAKES ALL



# 4 ALL-ACTION ISSUES NEXT MONTH

★ No. 9 **CRACK-UP**
*Red Devils—on a nightmare trip to hell !*

★ No. 10 **ACHTUNG — KOMMANDO !**
*They were masters of their tough trade—the grim business of war !*

★ No. 11 **BATTLE SHOCK**
*He sought to wash away his shame with blood !*

★ No. 12 **BLOOD ON THE SAND**
*The desert their battleground—destruction their mission !*

# BATTLE PICTURE LIBRARY

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# Loser Takes All

FOLLOWING UP THEIR TREACHEROUS ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOUR, THE SAVAGE FORCES OF IMPERIAL NIPPON BLUDGEONED THEIR WAY THROUGH THE HAPLESS ISLANDS OF THE PACIFIC WITH THE DESTRUCTIVE POWER OF A TIDAL WAVE. CONTESTING EVERY INCH OF GROUND, THE ILL-EQUIPPED ALLIES RETREATED DESPERATELY THROUGH JUNGLES AND SWAMPS TO THE BEACHES AND EACH BELEAGUERED ISLAND HAD ITS OWN MINIATURE DUNKIRK.

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# Chapter 1. THE LOADED DICE

IT WAS THE CHILLED-STEEL LOOK IN THE EYES OF THE TWO STRETCHER BEARERS RATHER THAN THE WORDS WHICH MADE THE SAILORS GIVE GROUND. WEARILY, THE MEN AFT MADE ROOM FOR THE NEWCOMERS.
RECKON WE MADE IT, RED.

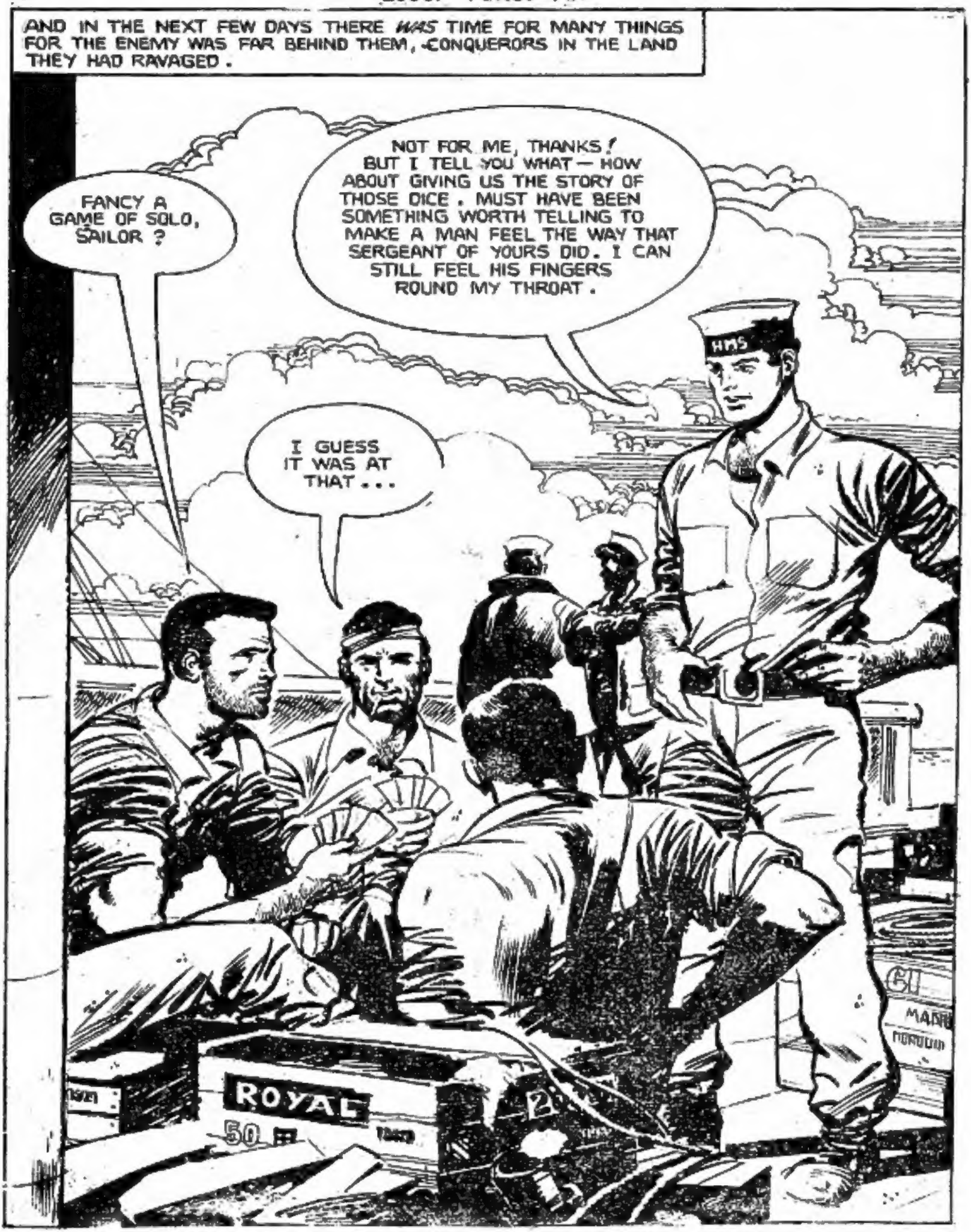
THE SETTING DOWN OF THE STRETCHER JARRED NICK JARRETT ALMOST BACK TO CONSCIOUSNESS. TO THE SAILORS' SURPRISE A PAIR OF GAMING DICE DROPPED FROM HIS STIFF FINGERS AND ROLLED ON THE DECK.
HEY, LOOK, THE SERGEANT'S BROUGHT HIS TOYS BACK WITH HIM!

SUDDENLY, ONE OF THE SAILORS NOTICED THAT THE DICE HAD LANDED WITH SEVEN SPOTS UPPERMOST – A WINNING NUMBER. HE SCOOPED UP THE DICE CURIOUSLY, SHOOK THEM AND ROLLED THEM. AGAIN THE NUMBERS SHOWING CAME TO SEVEN.
HERE, WHAT SORT OF A CHEAP CROOK DID YOU WIN THESE FROM, SARGE? THEY'RE LOADED . . .

NICK JARRETT'S REACTIONS WERE STARTLING AND UNEXPECTED.
HMS

THE SAILOR THUDDED TO THE DECK WITH A BONE-JARRING CRASH . . . AND THE SERGEANT WAVERED WEAKLY ON HIS FEET, HIS FACE CONTORTED WITH ANGER .
WHAT THE HECK . . ?

BARNES STEPPED FORWARD AND GENTLY PUSHED THE SERGEANT BACK ON TO THE STRETCHER AND LAPSED INTO UNCONSCIOUSNESS AGAIN . . .
UGH! MY THROAT — THE CRAZY FOOL! WHAT THE BLAZES GOT INTO HIM ?
THERE'S A LONG STORY BEHIND THEM DICE, SPORT. I'LL TELL YOU ABOUT IT SOME TIME . .


AND IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS THERE *WAS* TIME FOR MANY THINGS FOR THE ENEMY WAS FAR BEHIND THEM, CONQUERORS IN THE LAND THEY HAD RAVAGED.
FANCY A GAME OF SOLO, SAILOR ?
NOT FOR ME, THANKS! BUT I TELL YOU WHAT — HOW ABOUT GIVING US THE STORY OF THOSE DICE. MUST HAVE BEEN SOMETHING WORTH TELLING TO MAKE A MAN FEEL THE WAY THAT SERGEANT OF YOURS DID. I CAN STILL FEEL HIS FINGERS ROUND MY THROAT.
I GUESS IT WAS AT THAT...
HMS
ROYAL
50

# Chapter 2. YELLOW INVASION

THE FOUR LEADING ASSAULT CRAFT GROUNDED ON THE BEACH AND SQUAT, GREEN-CLAD JAPANESE MARINES POURED FROM THEIR BOW DOORS: HOWLING LIKE ANIMALS, THEY SCUTTLED ACROSS THE SANDS TOWARDS THE JUNGLE . . .
BANZAI!
LOOK AT THOSE CRAZY NIPS! THEY COME ON AS IF THEY LIKE THE TASTE OF THE LEAD WE'RE SLINGING AT 'EM!
FOR A TIME THE STUBBORN DEFENDERS HELD THEIR OWN. THE HEAPS OF SLAUGHTERED JAPS GREW, PROVIDING A GRIM KIND OF COVER FOR THOSE STILL TO LAND. IT WAS A RAID BY ENEMY ZERO FIGHTER-BOMBERS ON ARTILLERY POSITIONS WHICH TURNED THE BATTLE IN THE INVADERS' FAVOUR.
KEEP YOUR HEADS DOWN, LADS — THERE'S MORE TO COME!

THE AUSSIES HEARD THE WHINE OF FALLING BOMBS. THEY WAITED, HEARTS FLUTTERING, COUNTING THE SECONDS . . . THEN . . .

THE SUDDEN SILENCING OF THE TWENTY-FIVE POUNDERS CAUSED A BREECH IN THE THIN DEFENSIVE LINE AND RECKLESS JAP INFANTRYMEN SWARMED THROUGH, CUTTING THE AUSTRALIAN FORCE INTO TWO GROUPS.
MAKE SURE THEY'RE ALL DEAD BEFORE WE MOVE IN TO CUT OFF THE REST!

AT COMPANY H.Q., CAPTAIN FARRISH FOUND HIS FIELD TELEPHONE SYSTEM OUT OF ACTION. IT COULD ONLY MEAN ONE THING — JAP INFILTRATION!
THE LINE'S QUITE DEAD, SIR. I CAN'T GET BATTALION H.Q. — OR ANYBODY. I'D SAY IT'S BEEN CUT!
RIGHT. THAT SETTLES IT. WE'LL HAVE TO PULL OUT. I'LL SEND A MESSENGER TO WARN THE OTHERS.

FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER, A NERVOUS RUNNER WAS WORMING HIS WAY THROUGH THE CLAMMY UNDERGROWTH TOWARDS THE REAR OF SERGEANT JARRETT'S POSITION.
THIS DARNED JUNGLE'S GIVING ME THE CREEPS... EVERY BLOOMIN' LEAF LOOKS TO HAVE SLANT EYES.

HE WAS WITHIN A FEW YARDS OF THE FORWARD OUTPOSTS WHEN JACK BARNES, WHO WAS RELOADING HIS BREN, HEARD THE SNAPPING OF DEAD TWIGS . . .
ONE OF THEM YELLOW GEYSERS IS CREEPIN' IN ON US FROM BEHIND, SARGE. I CAN HEAR HIM!
HOLD YOUR FIRE, JACK!

BARNES' FACE WAS A STUDY IN CONFLICTING EMOTIONS AS THE BREATHLESS RUNNER EMERGED FROM THE JUNGLE AND STUMBLED INTO THE TRENCH.
WHAT'S THE NEWS, MATE?
CAPTAIN SAYS TO GET YOUR SECTION OUT PRONTO, SARGE. MAKE YOUR WAY INDEPENDENTLY TO SALAMAUA, FURTHER EAST.
GOOD GRIEF! IF I'D SHOT 'IM WE'D 'AVE BEEN STUCK 'ERE TILL THEY WIPED US OUT.

THEY PULLED OUT. LEAVING BARNES TO BRING UP THE REAR WITH THE BREN, JARRETT LED THE WAY UP THE SLOPE INTO THE JUNGLE. TAKING THE RUNNER WITH HIM.
PASS THE WORD BACK FOR EVERY SIXTH MAN TO WATCH THE TREES ABOVE HEAD LEVEL.
OKAY, SARGE!

SWEAT SOAKED THE SHIRTS OF THE MEN AS THEY STRUGGLED UP THE SLOPE, HACKING THEIR WAY THROUGH THE TANGLED UNDERGROWTH. AND NONE WERE PREPARED FOR THE STACCATO CHATTER OF A JAP MACHINE-GUN WHICH LAY IN AMBUSH FOR THEM.
AAAAGH!

AS THEY FLUNG THEMSELVES INTO COVER, JACK BARNES' EYES GLINTED VENGEFULLY . . .
I'VE GOT 'IM PINPOINTED, SARGE. BE'IND THE BIG RUBBER TREE ON OUR RIGHT!

EVEN AS BARNES CALLED, JARRETT WAS FEELING FOR THE RING OF A GRENADE . . .
ALL RIGHT, JACK, GIVE HIM A BURST!

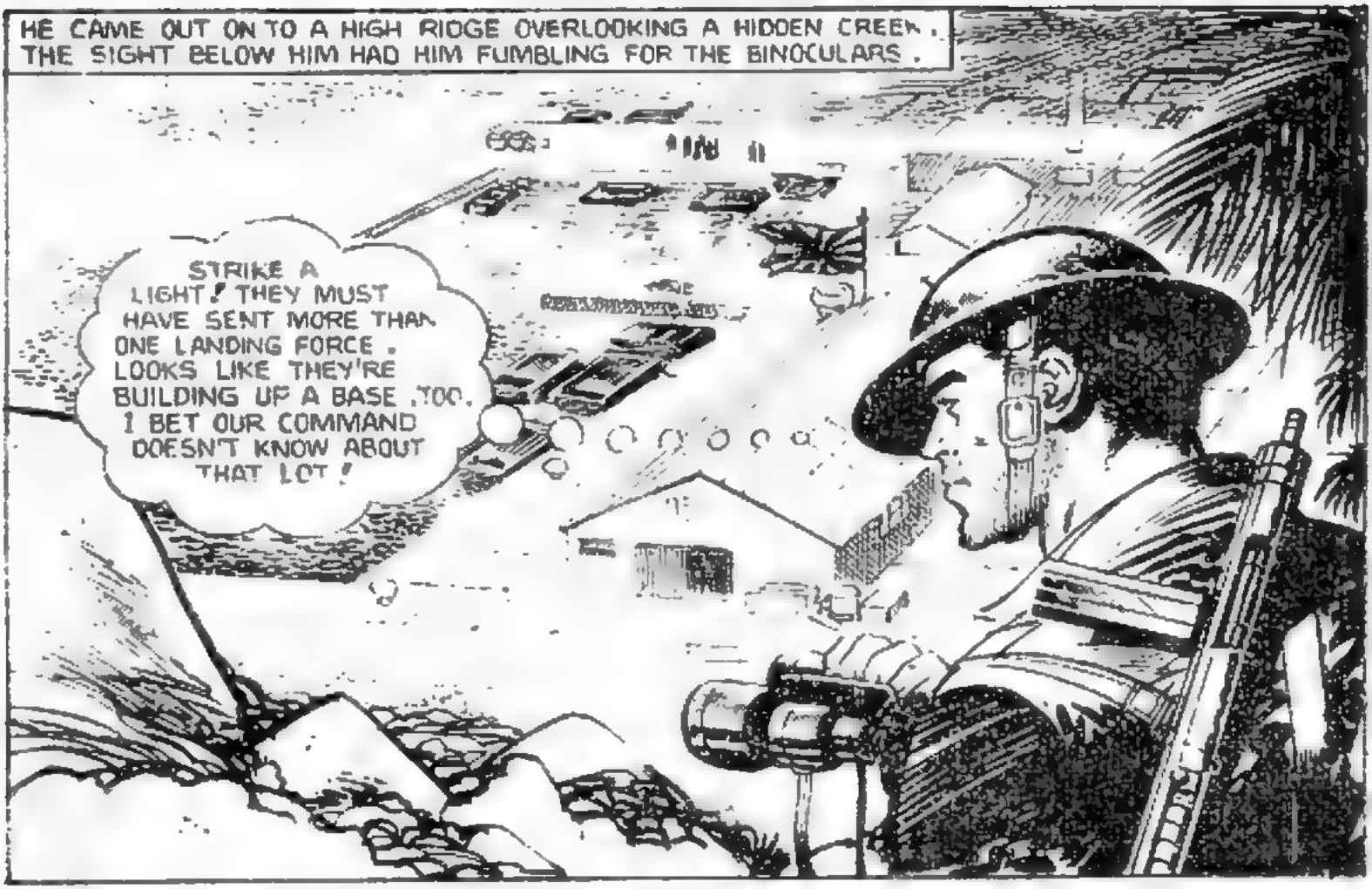
BULLETS RIPPED INTO THE FOLIAGE CONCEALING THE JAP. AND INSTINCTIVELY, HE RETURNED BARNES' FIRE. NEXT MOMENT, JARRETT'S SKILFULLY THROWN GRENADE BLASTED THE ENEMY POSITION.
GOOD ON YER, SARGE!

THREE OF THE AUSTRALIANS HAD DIED IN THAT AMBUSH AND THEIR SHOCKED COMRADES DUG A ROUGH GRAVE. A RIFLE AND BAYONET WAS THRUST INTO THE GROUND AND JARRETT MURMURED A FEW HALTING WORDS OF PRAYER . . .
ALL RIGHT, MATES, THAT'S ALL WE CAN DO FOR THEM. LET'S PUT SOME JUNGLE BETWEEN US AND THIS AREA AS SOON AS WE CAN.

AFTER THAT, JARRETT SET AN EXHAUSTING, MUSCLE-CRACKING PACE. THE AUSSIES MARCHED FROM DAWN TO DUSK AND ABOUT MIDDAY, THREE DAYS LATER, THE SERGEANT HEARD THE DISTANT MURMUR OF SURF.
I'M GOING TO TAKE A LOOK-SEE AT THE OCEAN, RED. BE READY TO MOVE OFF IN AN HOUR — AND DON'T LET THE LOOKOUTS DOZE OFF.

VETERANS OF MANY TOUGH CAMPAIGNS TOGETHER, IT WAS THE SERGEANT, RED WALTON AND JACK BARNES WHO HAD BROUGHT THE COLUMN THAT FAR . . .
IF YOU'RE NOT BACK, WE'LL COME AND LOOK FOR YER, NICK.
LIKE HECK YOU WILL. YOU'LL PUSH ON WITHOUT ME — AND THAT'S AN ORDER!

ARMED WITH A STEN GUN, BAYONET AND GRENADES, JARRETT CARVED HIMSELF A PATH TO THE SHORE WITH A NATIVE MACHETE. SOON THE TREES BEGAN TO THIN.
DON'T SEEM POSSIBLE THAT THE JAPS HAVE GOT AHEAD OF US — BUT YOU NEVER KNOW WITH THOSE CUNNING DEVILS!


HE CAME OUT ON TO A HIGH RIDGE OVERLOOKING A HIDDEN CREEK. THE SIGHT BELOW HIM HAD HIM FUMBLING FOR THE BINOCULARS.
STRIKE A LIGHT! THEY MUST HAVE SENT MORE THAN ONE LANDING FORCE. LOOKS LIKE THEY'RE BUILDING UP A BASE TOO. I BET OUR COMMAND DOESN'T KNOW ABOUT THAT LOT!

THE VIEW THROUGH HIS BINOCULARS FILLED JARRETT WITH A BITTER FOREBODING. THE JAPANESE WERE MASSING LANDING CRAFT AND HE KNEW THAT LESS THAN A HUNDRED MILES SEPARATED NEW GUINEA FROM THE AUSTRALIAN MAINLAND.

MOVING CAUTIOUSLY LEST HE STUMBLE ON ENEMY OUTPOSTS, JARRETT HURRIED BACK TO HIS SECTION AND THEY SET OFF AGAIN, FASTER THAN EVER. FOUR DAYS' LATER THEY REACHED THE A.I.F. BASE NEAR SALAMAUA.
HOWDY, SPORT. WE'RE FROM THE BACK OF BEYOND. WHERE CAN I FIND THE C.O.?
HI, COBBER. YOU ALMOST LEFT IT TOO LATE! THE COLONEL'S JUST GIVEN ORDERS TO PULL OUT SOUTH AGAIN.

JARRETT LEFT HIS MEN AND SOUGHT OUT THE COLONEL. THE OLDER MAN LISTENED TO HIM GRAVELY.
YOU'RE RIGHT, SERGEANT, WE NEED TO KNOW MORE ABOUT IT. WOULD YOU UNDERTAKE TO GO BACK WITH SOME MEN?
YESSIR! IF YOU THINK WE CAN BE OF ANY USE.

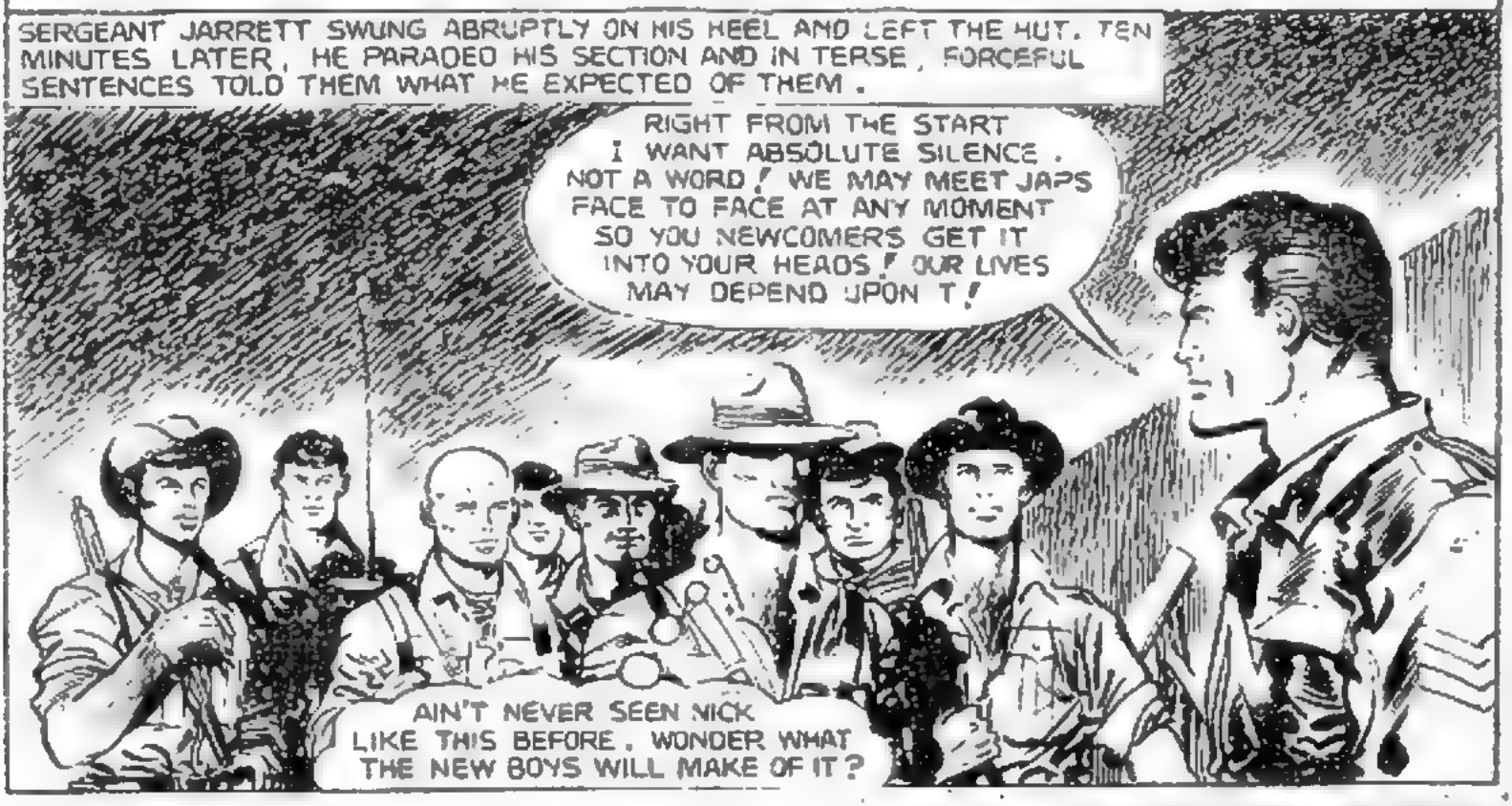
THE COLONEL WENT ON TO EXPLAIN THAT AFTER THEIR MISSION, THE PARTY WOULD HAVE TO CROSS THE MOUNTAINOUS OWEN STANLEY RANGE TO GET BACK TO PORT MORESBY. EVEN THIS NEWS LEFT JARRETT UNDAUNTED.
ALL RIGHT, SERGEANT. GET WHAT FOOD AND REST YOU CAN. WHEN WE PULL OUT IN THE MORNING, I'LL LEAVE TWELVE VOLUNTEERS BEHIND PLUS DEMOLITION EQUIPMENT. GOOD LUCK TO YOU!
THANK YOU, SIR. WE MAY NEED ALL THE LUCK WE CAN GET.

NICK JARRETT SLEPT SOLIDLY FOR TWELVE HOURS. THE NEXT MORNING HIS SMALL SECTION OF VOLUNTEERS WERE GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER WHILE HE SAID FAREWELL TO THE COLONEL.
SEEMS YOU JOKERS LOST AGAIN!
NO WONDER THEY CALL YOU LUCKY LU. I FIGURE YOU'VE PLAYED FOR HIGHER STAKES THAN CIGARETTES.

AT THAT MOMENT, NICK ENTERED THE HUT. HE CAUGHT SIGHT OF THE NEWCOMER STUFFING THE CIGARETTES INTO HIS POCKETS AND HIS FACE STIFFENED INTO A BLEAK MASK...
BOSETTI! YOU MUST HAVE SLIPPED TO LET YOURSELF BE CALLED UP INTO THE ARMY. AND DON'T TELL ME YOU VOLUNTEERED FOR THIS JOB?
WELL, OF ALL THE LUCK! OLD NICK JARRETT OF THE SYDNEY C.I.D.!

JACK BARNES AND RED WALTON STEPPED BACK, AWARE LIKE THE OTHERS, OF THE SUDDEN TENSION IN THE ROOM....
IF I'D KNOWN THERE WERE ANY HARD-FACED COPS AROUND, I WOULDN'T HAVE VOLUNTEERED ... BUT RIGHT NOW, IT LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE STUCK WITH ME, SARGE!

# Chapter 3. SPECIAL FORCE



# Loser Takes All

# Loser Takes All

TTI'S EYES NARROWED AND WITHOUT A WORD HE BEGAN TO
LE FORWARD STEALTHILY THROUGH THE UNDERGROWTH. HIS
AND EARS STRAINING, NICK FOLLOWED A FEW YARDS
IND.

THE WIRY ITALIAN PAUSED — POINTED — AND A FEW SECONDS LATER, MOVED ON AGAIN. THIS TIME, JARRETT STAYED STILL, AWAITING DEVELOPMENTS.

WITH ALL THE SINEWY STEALTH OF A JUNGLE CAT, BOSETTI STRAIGHTENED — A KNIFE BALANCED IN HIS PALM. SUDDENLY, HIS ARM FLICKED UPWARDS . . . AND THE KNIFE BLADE GLINTED IN THE SUNLIGHT.

BOSETTI WAS SO SURE OF HIS AIM THAT HE MOVED OPENLY FORWARD TO THE FOOT OF THE TREE AND LOOKED UP AT HIS HANDIWORK.
WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THAT, SARGE? SPOT ON, EH?
YEAH! YOU'RE RIGHT HANDY WITH A KNIFE — I HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN THAT, BOSETTI!

THE AUSSIES HURRIEDLY BURIED THEIR DEAD AND MOVED ON — MORE CAUTIOUSLY NOW. AT THE MIDDAY HALT, WALTON AND BARNES TOOK IT UPON THEMSELVES TO DO WHAT THEY COULD ABOUT A SPREADING DISCONTENT AMONG THE OTHER VOLUNTEERS.
THIS BOSETTI FELLER'S A GOOD SOLDIER, NICK, WHATEVER HE WAS BACK IN SYDNEY. AREN'T YOU BEING A BIT HARD ON HIM?
YOU LEAVE ME TO RUN THIS SECTION MY WAY, RED.
OKAY, NICK — IF THAT'S THE WAY YOU WANT IT.

# Loser Takes All

DURING HALTS IN THE FOLLOWING TWENTY-FOUR HOURS, NICK BECAME INCREASINGLY AWARE OF THE FEELING RUNNING AGAINST HIM — BUT THERE WAS SOMETHING MORE URGENT WORRYING HIM.

ANOTHER HALF HOUR PASSED. JARRETT WAS STEALING HIMSELF TO MAKE THE DAMNING ADMISSION TO HIS MEN WHEN A HEARTRENDING HUMAN SCREAM OF ANGUISH TRANSFIXED HIM IN HIS TRACKS . . .

THEY PRESSED FORWARD — QUICKLY BUT CAUTIOUSLY. IN A CLEARING THEY FOUND A BRUTAL SCENE. A YOUNG NATIVE BOY WAS BOUND TO A TREE AND WAS BEING WHIPPED BY ONE OF TWO JAPANESE SOLDIERS.
NO SEE-UM WHITE SOLDIER MASTA. ME TELL-UM TRUTH!
WE'VE GOT TO SET THE POOR FUZZY FREE, NICK. WE CAN'T LEAVE HIM!
HOLD IT!

THE SERGEANT DREW BACK SILENTLY AND ROSE TO HIS FEET BEHIND A TREE. HIS CAUTION PAID OFF.
LOOK! MORE JAPS OVER THERE. WE CAN'T TAKE A CHANCE.
PAH! JUST LIKE A COP—

BEFORE JARRETT COULD STOP HIM, BOSETTI HAD SLIPPED AWAY. NOT KNOWING WHAT THE ITALIAN HAD IN MIND HE COULD ONLY WARN THE OTHERS TO BE ON THE ALERT...
WHAT IN TARNATION IS BOSETTI UP TO NOW?
KEEP DOWN, EVERYBODY, AND WHATEVER YOU DO DON'T GIVE THE ALARM!

PRESENTLY, TO THE STRAINING EARS OF THE AUSSIES THERE CAME A CLICK-CLICK-CLICKING SOUND FROM SOME TWENTY YARDS TO THEIR REAR.
IT'S BOSETTI. 'E'S SIGNALLING LIKE THE JAPS DO WITH A CLICKING-STICK!
SURE. BUT THAT AIN'T NO CLICKING-STICK HE'S USING. KNOW WHAT IT IS? IT'S THEM DARNED LOADED DICE!

MUTTERING TO ONE ANOTHER ABOUT THE CLICKING MESSAGE WHICH THEY COULD NOT UNDERSTAND, THE TWO NIPPON GUARDS TURNED FROM THEIR SADISTIC TORTURING OF THE NATIVE AND STALKED INTO THE JUNGLE TO INVESTIGATE.
JUST ANOTHER COUPLE OF CLICKS AND YOU TWO YELLOW MONKEYS WILL BE BUZZARD BAIT!

WARY BUT UNSUSPECTING, THE JAPS WALKED QUIETLY INTO THE TRAP. THEY SUCCUMBED WITH LITTLE MORE THAN A GASP.
THAT'S THE LAST TIME YOU'LL TORTURE ANY FUZZIES, SPORT!

BOSETTI MOVED STEALTHILY INTO THE CLEARING AND FREED THE NATIVE WITHOUT ATTRACTING THE NOTICE OF THE OTHER JAPANESE SOLDIERS.
THIS FELLER TE- VERY HAPPY YOU COME, MASTA.
MASTA HAPPY, TOO. KILL-UM TWO FELLER JAPAN!
ONCE FREED, THE GRATEFUL NATIVE STRAIGHTENED WITH AN EFFORT AND STUMBLED ACROSS THE CLEARING.
HEY. WAIT. LET'S SEE YO THAT BACK OF YOURS!
NO MASTA. TELI GRATEFUL BUT TELI GO NOW.
AND IN A FEW SECONDS THE NATIVE HAD DISAPPEARED FROM VIEW.

THE SECTION MOVED OFF AGAIN AT ONCE FOR EVERY MAN KNEW HOW IMPORTANT IT WAS TO GET CLEAR OF THE JAP PATROL . NOBODY SPOKE UNTIL THE NEXT HALT .
YOU LOOKED RIGHT GOOD BACK THERE, SARGE FIXIN' THAT JAP.
YOU DID ALL RIGHT YOURSELF, BUT YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE TAKEN SUCH A BIG CHANCE WITH THAT OICE TRICK. YOU MIGHT'VE BROUGHT THE WHOLE JAP PATROL DOWN ON US!

NICK'S HARSH RETORT MOVED BOSETTI TO SUDDEN ANGER .
YOU FIGURE THAT POOR FUZZY WASN'T WORTH IT, EH? BUT I WAS FORGETTING - YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN AGAINST THE UNDERDOG, HAVEN'T YOU, JARRETT?

# Loser Takes All

JARRETT'S ANGER — NEVER FAR FROM THE SURFACE SINCE BOSETTI JOINED THE PARTY — SHOWED ITSELF IN TURN.

YOU KNOW THAT'S NOT TRUE, BOSETTI. AND YOU SHOULD BE SMART ENOUGH TO KNOW WE'VE GOT TO AVOID CLASHES WITH THE JAPS — ESPECIALLY SINCE THE WIRELESS WENT KAPUT!

RATTLED BY HIS OWN SUDDEN OUTBURST, JARRETT TURNED ON HIS HEEL AND STALKED OFF ALONE . . . BOSETTI, SIGHING, WANDERED OVER TO THE OTHERS.

WHAT GOES WITH THAT JARRETT, LU? HE AIN'T NEVER DONE NEEDLIN' YOU. WHAT'S HE HATE YOU FOR?

HE RECKONS HE'S GOT GOOD REASON TO HATE ME, I GUESS!

BOSETTI'S WORDS HAD A PROFOUND EFFECT UPON THE PARTY. WHEN THEY MOVED ON AGAIN, MUCH OF THE TENSION HAD LEFT THEM. THAT NIGHT, NICK DECIDED TO CLEAR HIS CONSCIENCE.

# Chapter 4. OBJECTIVE AHEAD

NERVES TAUTENED TO SNAPPING POINT . . . BODIES SWEATED WITH APPREHENSION . . .
WHY THE BLAZES DON'T THEY OPEN UP IF THEY KNOW THEY'VE GOT US SURROUNDED?

SUDDENLY A SHORT FIGURE STEPPED OUT OF THE UNDERGROWTH . THE WAITING AUSSIES LET OUT THEIR PENT-UP BREATH IN A SERIES OF LONG DRAWN OUT GROANS . . .
YOU COME TO LONG HOUSE, MASTA?
. . THAT'S MY BOY, ALL RIGHT!
SURE WE'LL COME . WHERE ARE YOUR FRIENDS?

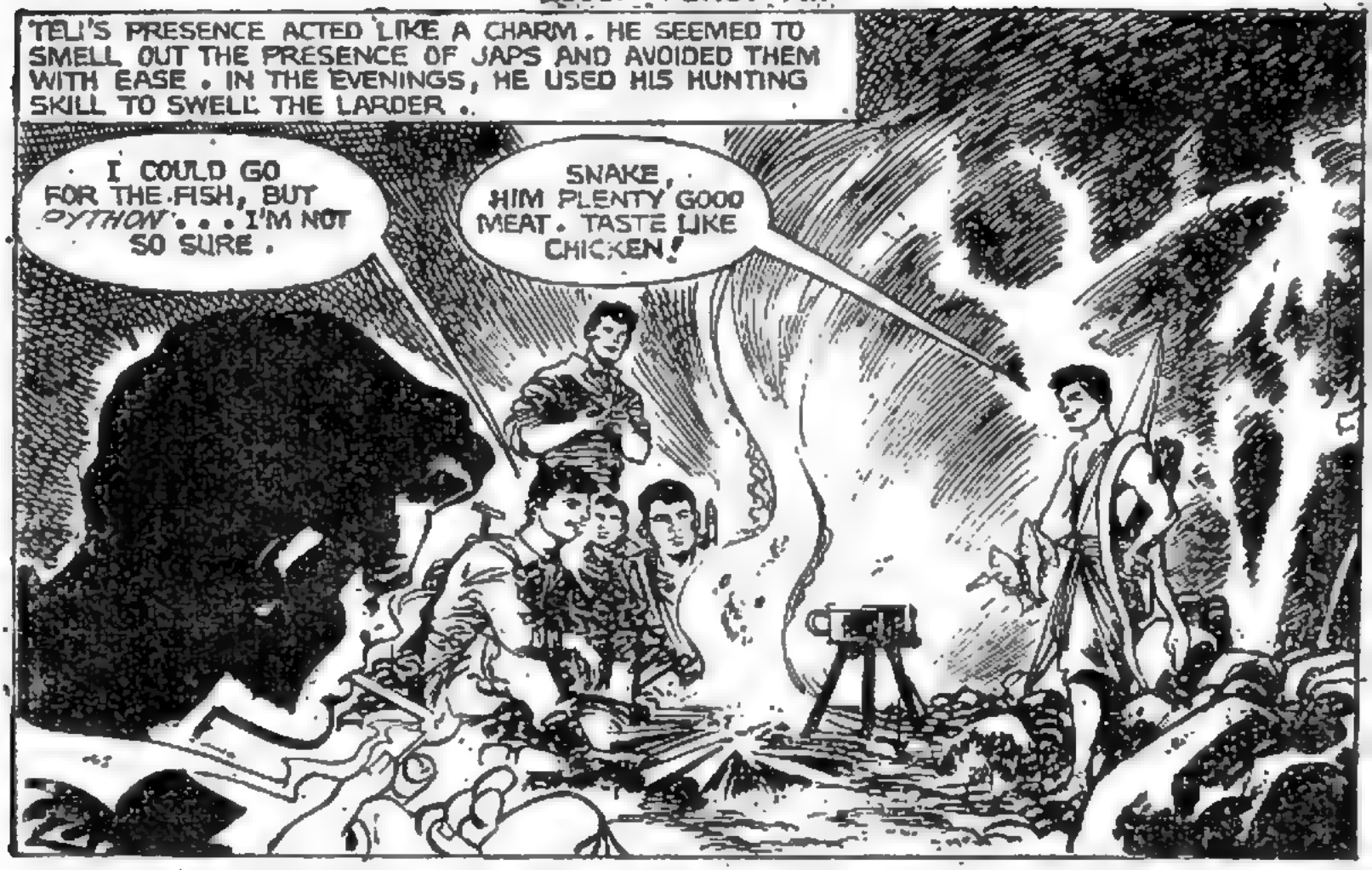
IN ANSWER TO A CALL FROM TELI, MORE THAN A DOZEN SMALL NATIVES STEPPED OUT FROM AMONGST THE TREES.
TELI, HIM THINK CHURCHILL NUMBER-ONE BOY. TOJO NUMBER-TEN!
HEY, GET THAT! FANCY THESB FUZZIES KNOWING ABOUT WAR LEADERS.

A FEW MINUTES LATER, THE WHOLE PARTY WAS ON ITS WAY TO THE NATIVE VILLAGE. TELI LED THE WAY UNERRINGLY ALONG AN UNMARKED TRAIL, SLASHING DOWN IMPEDING VINES AND CREEPERS WITH A MACHETE.

QUITE SUDDENLY THEY CAME UPON A NUMBER OF SCATTERED HUTS IN A CLEARING. AN EXCITED GROUP OF NATIVES ADVANCED ON THEM, SOME CARRYING TORCHES.
HIM BACCHI, MASTA. NUMBER-ONE BOY!
WELCOME, MASTA. YOU COME BIG HOUSE-KIAP. YOU SAFE HERE.

THE WEARY SOLDIERS SLEPT THE CLOCK ROUND AND AFTER AN ENORMOUS MEAL OF WILD PIG, DUCK, BOILED RICE AND FRUIT, JARRETT WENT OVER HIS PLANS WITH BACCHI AND TELI. BY MEANS OF A CRUDE PENCILLED SKETCH ON THE BACK OF HIS MAP, HE EXPLAINED WHERE HE WANTED TO GO.
PLENTY JAPAN PUT-PUT.
MASTA WANT-UM GUIDE. TAKE-UM ALONG JAPAN PUT-PUT.
CAN DO, MASTA. TELI GO. HIM NUMBER-ONE GUIDE!

AN HOUR LATER, THEY LEFT THE FRIENDLY VILLAGE TO THE HAUNTING SOUNDS OF THE KUNDU DRUMS...
WON'T THE DRUMS GIVE US AWAY, TELI?
KUNDU DRUMS WARN-UM OTHER WARRIORS NO SHOOT ARROWS AT WHITE SOLDIER MASTAS. JAPAN FELLERS NO UNDERSTAND KUNDU.


TELI'S PRESENCE ACTED LIKE A CHARM. HE SEEMED TO SMELL OUT THE PRESENCE OF JAPS AND AVOIDED THEM WITH EASE. IN THE EVENINGS, HE USED HIS HUNTING SKILL TO SWELL THE LARDER.
I COULD GO FOR THE FISH, BUT PYTHON... I'M NOT SO SURE.
SNAKE, HIM PLENTY GOOD MEAT. TASTE LIKE CHICKEN!

AT THE END OF TWO DAYS, TELI LED THEM ON TO THE RIDGE ABOVE THE SECRET CREEK.
WELL, THERE IT IS, COBBERS. THAT LITTLE LOTS BEING STACKED UP FOR AN INVASION — PROBABLY OF AUSTRALIA. AND WE'VE GOT TO DESTROY IT!
IT WON'T BE EASY, NICK.

AFTER TAKING A LONG LOOK THROUGH THE GLASSES AT THEIR OBJECTIVE, THE SECTION WITHDREW INTO THE JUNGLE TO REST UP UNTIL NIGHTFALL.

WHEN YOU KILL-UM JAPAN, YOU FOLLOW STREAM, GO OVER MOUNTAIN. TELI, HIM NO COME. TELI GO BACK TO LONG HOUSE NOW.

WHITE MASTA, HIM NO GOOD WITHOUT TELI.

JARRETT TRIED TO PERSUADE THE NATIVE TO STAY LONGER, BUT HE WAS ADAMANT. AFTER SHAKING HANDS SOLEMNLY ALL ROUND, HE SLIPPED AWAY INTO THE SHADOW OF THE TREES. NICK SIGHED AND BEGAN TO OUTLINE HIS PLAN.

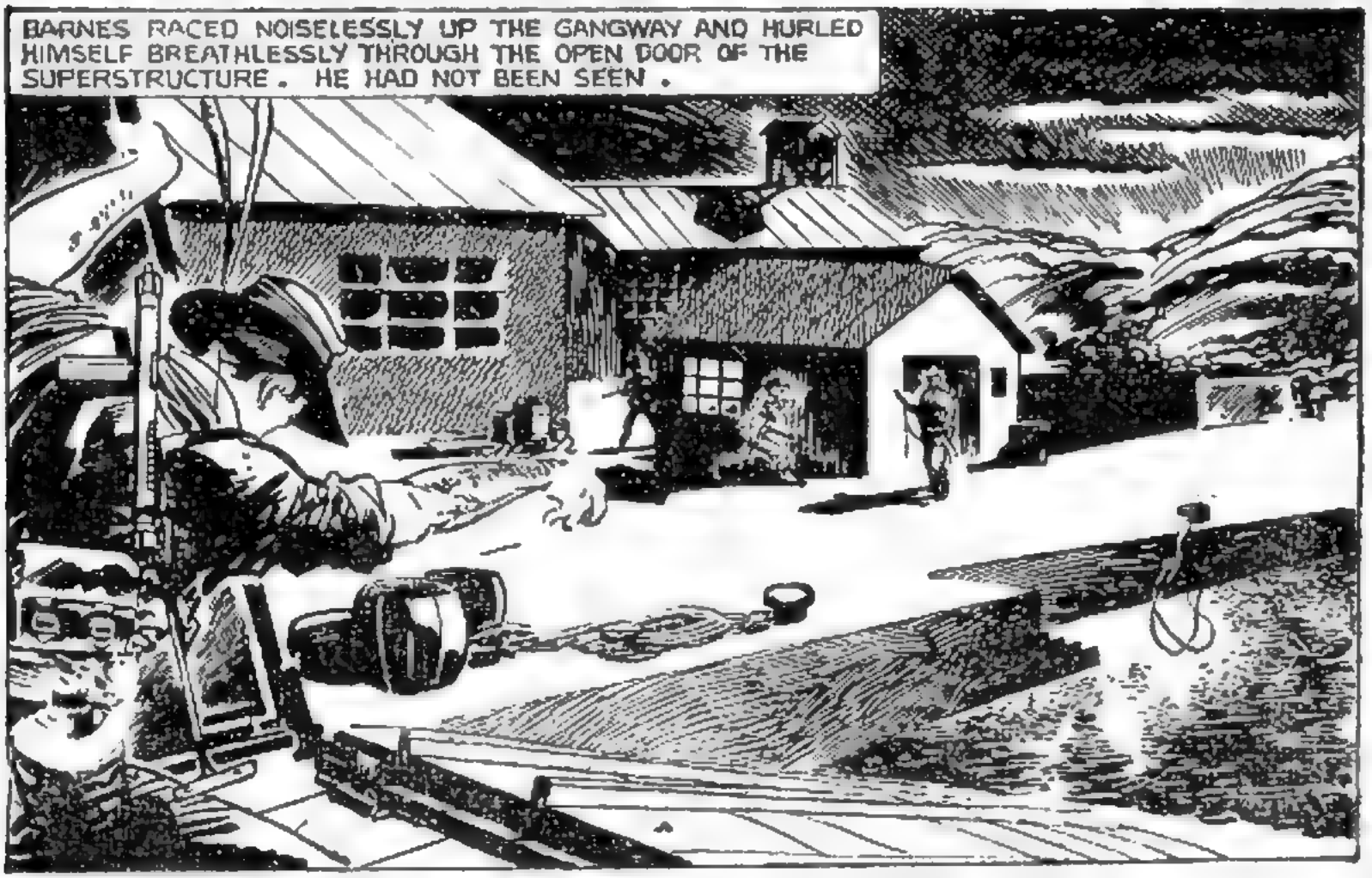
WE'RE GOING TO SABOTAGE THE BARGES NEAREST THE SEA TO BLOCK THE CHANNEL. BARNES, WALTON AND I WILL SET OFF AN HOUR BEFORE DUSK, WORK OUR WAY ROUND THE OTHER SIDE AND DO THE ACTUAL JOB. WE'LL COME BACK UP THIS SIDE. BOSETTI, I WANT YOU AND THE REST TO GET DOWN THE SLOPE AND COVER US.

IF THAT'S THE WAY YOU WANT IT, SARGE, OKAY.

IF THINGS GO BADLY FOR US, SURVIVORS ARE TO COME BACK HERE, WAIT TILL DAWN FOR STRAGGLERS, THEN PUSH OFF OVER THE MOUNTAINS, LIKE TELI SAID.

THE TIME PASSED QUICKLY, NICK, RED AND JACK SLIPPED AWAY EARLY, LEAVING THE OTHERS CLEANING THEIR WEAPONS.
THE LAST FEW YARDS WILL BE THE WORST, NICK, WHEN WE CREEP UP ON THE SENTRY, THERE.
THAT'S SO. WELL, LET'S GO — BOSETTI SHOULD BE IN PLACE NOW.

THEY COMPLETED THE DESCENT TO THE WATER'S EDGE WITHOUT INCIDENT. WHILE THE SENTRY WAS PACING THE OTHER WAY, BARNES RACED FOR THE NEAREST BARGE.
IT'S NECK OR NOTHING!


BARNES RACED NOISELESSLY UP THE GANGWAY AND HURLED HIMSELF BREATHLESSLY THROUGH THE OPEN DOOR OF THE SUPERSTRUCTURE. HE HAD NOT BEEN SEEN.

JARRETT LEAPT UPON THE UNSUSPECTING SENTRY, INSTANTLY SILENCING THE SHOCKED GRUNT OF ALARM THAT ROSE TO HIS LIPS. AT THE SAME TIME, JACK BARNES CAT-FOOTED OVER TO THE NEXT BARGE.
THAT'S YOU FIXED. NEXT THE EXPLOSIVES . . .
UUGH!

RED WALTON SLIPPED INTO THE DESERTED HUT AND BEGAN TO SEARCH AMONG THE AMMUNITION CASES. HE SOON UNEARTHED SOME EXPLOSIVE CHARGES AND A LENGTH OF FUSE.
THERE'S ALL WE WANT HERE, NICK. HOW'S JACK MAKING OUT?
OKAY. HE'S CUT THE BOW ROPE OF THE SECOND BARGE. IT'S SWINGING OUT INTO THE STREAM. HURRY IT UP!

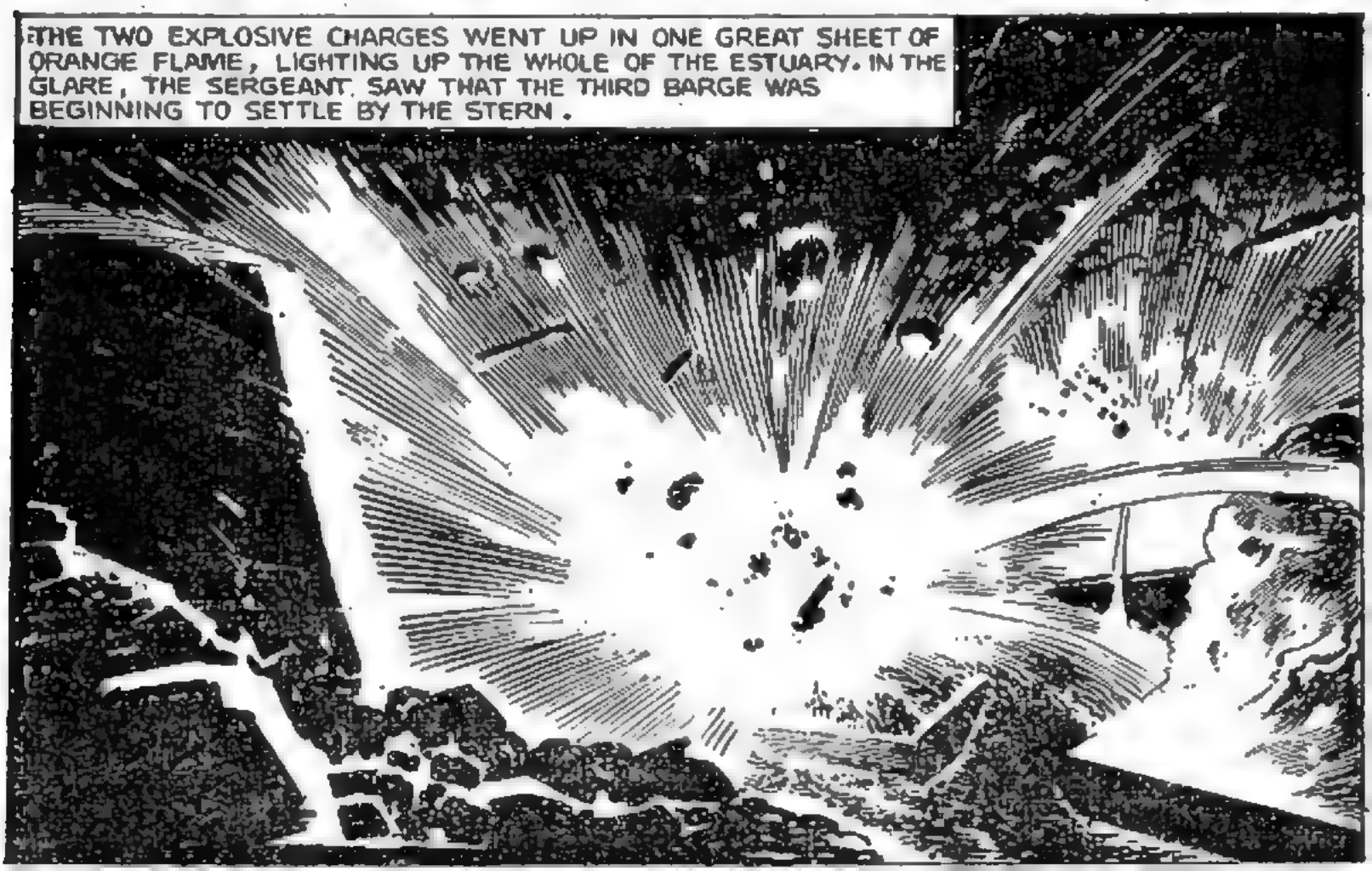
# Loser Takes All

BOTH FUSES WERE SPARKING FURIOUSLY WITHIN A FEW SECONDS AND, HAND OVER HAND, JACK BARNES LED THE WAY TO THE OTHER BARGE.
GET ON THE ROPE AS SOON AS NICK'S CLEAR RED!

RED WAS ONLY HALF WAY ACROSS WHEN, WITH STARTLING SUDDENNESS, THE ALARM BROKE OUT. A PROBING SEARCHLIGHT FLICKERED OVER THE BARGES THEY HAD JUST LEFT. IT MOVED ON, FLASHED ACROSS RED'S HANGING FIGURE — PAUSED — THEN SWUNG BACK . . .
HANG IT! THEY'VE SPOTTED US!
FOR PETE'S SAKE, HURRY IT UP, RED!

A DISTANT MACHINE-GUN STUTTERED INTO LIFE, PUMPING BRIGHT TRACER BULLETS DOWN THE LINE OF THE SEARCHLIGHT BEAM. THE LIFE-LINE TO SAFETY WAS CUT BUT RED DID NOT LOSE HIS GRIP...
HOLD ON, RED, WHATEVER YOU DO! WE'LL HAUL YOU IN!
BY THIS TIME, BOSETTI'S COVERING PARTY HAD OPENED UP ON THE GUN AND BEAM GIVING THE THREE MEN A FEW PRECIOUS MOMENTS IN WHICH TO GET CLEAR.
QUICK, COBBERS! RUN FOR THE WHARF! AND GET UNDER COVER. THE CHARGES ARE DUE TO BLOW ANY SECOND.
BUT NICK DID NOT MEAN TO LEAVE THE THIRD BARGE UNDAMAGED.

THE SERGEANT DROPPED A GRENADE DOWN THE HATCH AND PRAYED THAT IT WOULD HOLE THE BOTTOM OF THE BARGE. THEN HE TURNED AND RACED FOR THE BANK, FOLLOWED BY A LETHAL BURST OF TRACER.


THE TWO EXPLOSIVE CHARGES WENT UP IN ONE GREAT SHEET OF ORANGE FLAME, LIGHTING UP THE WHOLE OF THE ESTUARY. IN THE GLARE, THE SERGEANT SAW THAT THE THIRD BARGE WAS BEGINNING TO SETTLE BY THE STERN.

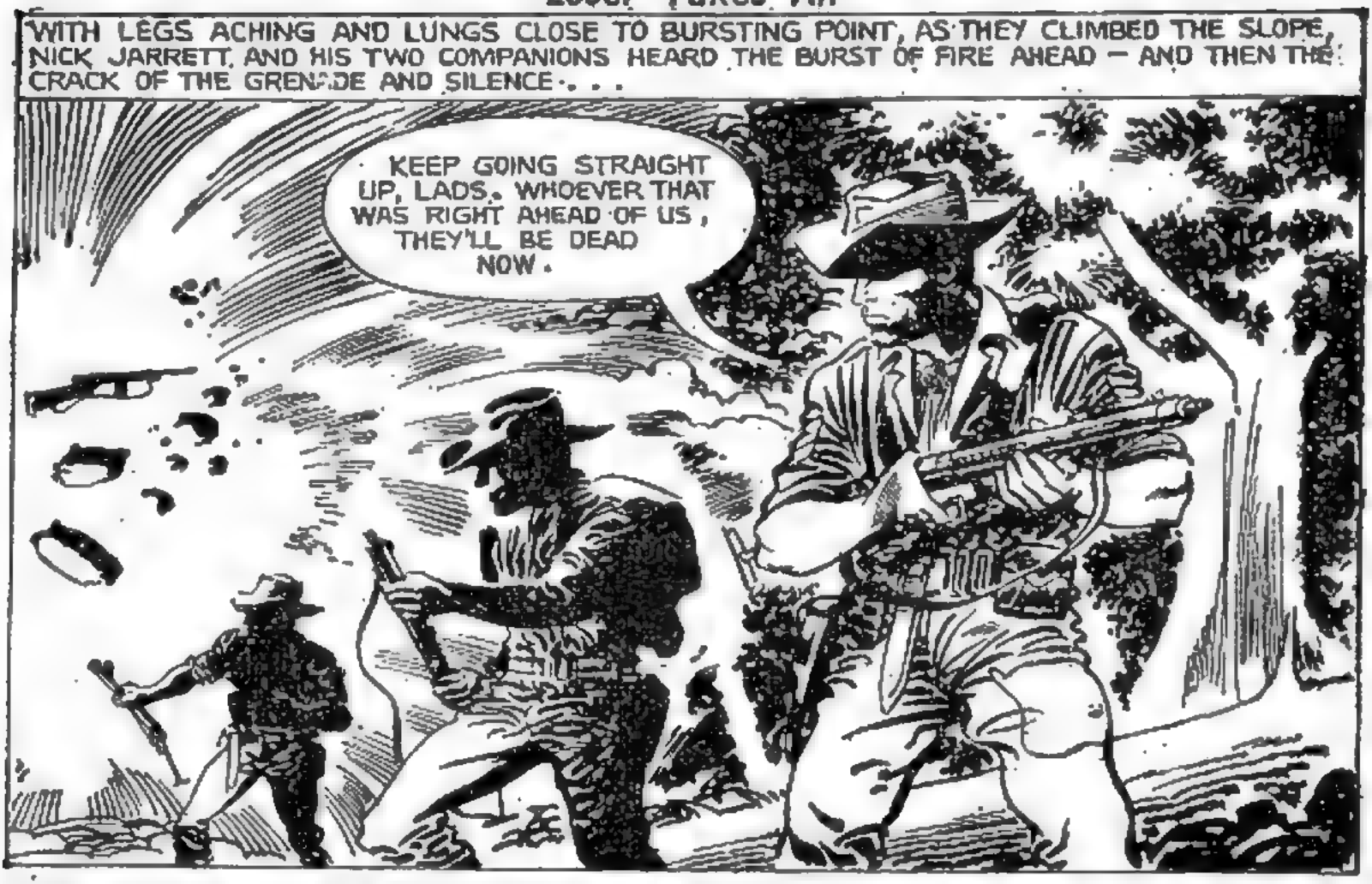
FROM THEIR PRECARIOUS POSITION HALF WAY UP THE SLOPE, BOSETTI AND HIS COVER PARTY YELLED WITH TRIUMPH . . .
THEY MADE IT, GOSH DARN IT! YIPPEEE!
THEY'LL NOT CLEAR THAT CHANNEL IN MONTHS!

BUT THEIR TRIUMPH WAS SHORT LIVED. A MURDEROUS HAIL OF BULLETS SUDDENLY SLASHED INTO THEIR POSITION FROM HIGHER UP THE SLOPE, CUTTING THE AUSSIES DOWN BEFORE THEY COULD EVEN TURN TO MEET THE THREAT AT THEIR REAR. ONLY BOSETTI HAD THE PRESENCE OF MIND TO ACT QUICKLY ENOUGH . . .

WITH THE DEATH CRIES OF HIS COMRADES RINGING IN HIS EARS, BOSETTI FLUNG HIMSELF DOWN THE SLOPE, SLIDING AND SLIPPING FOR ALMOST A HUNDRED FEET. WHEN HE CAME TO A HALT, HE WAS ONLY YARDS FROM AN ENEMY MACHINE-GUN POST . . .

IF MY TIME'S UP, I'M TAKING THESE MONKEYS WITH ME!

# Loser Takes All



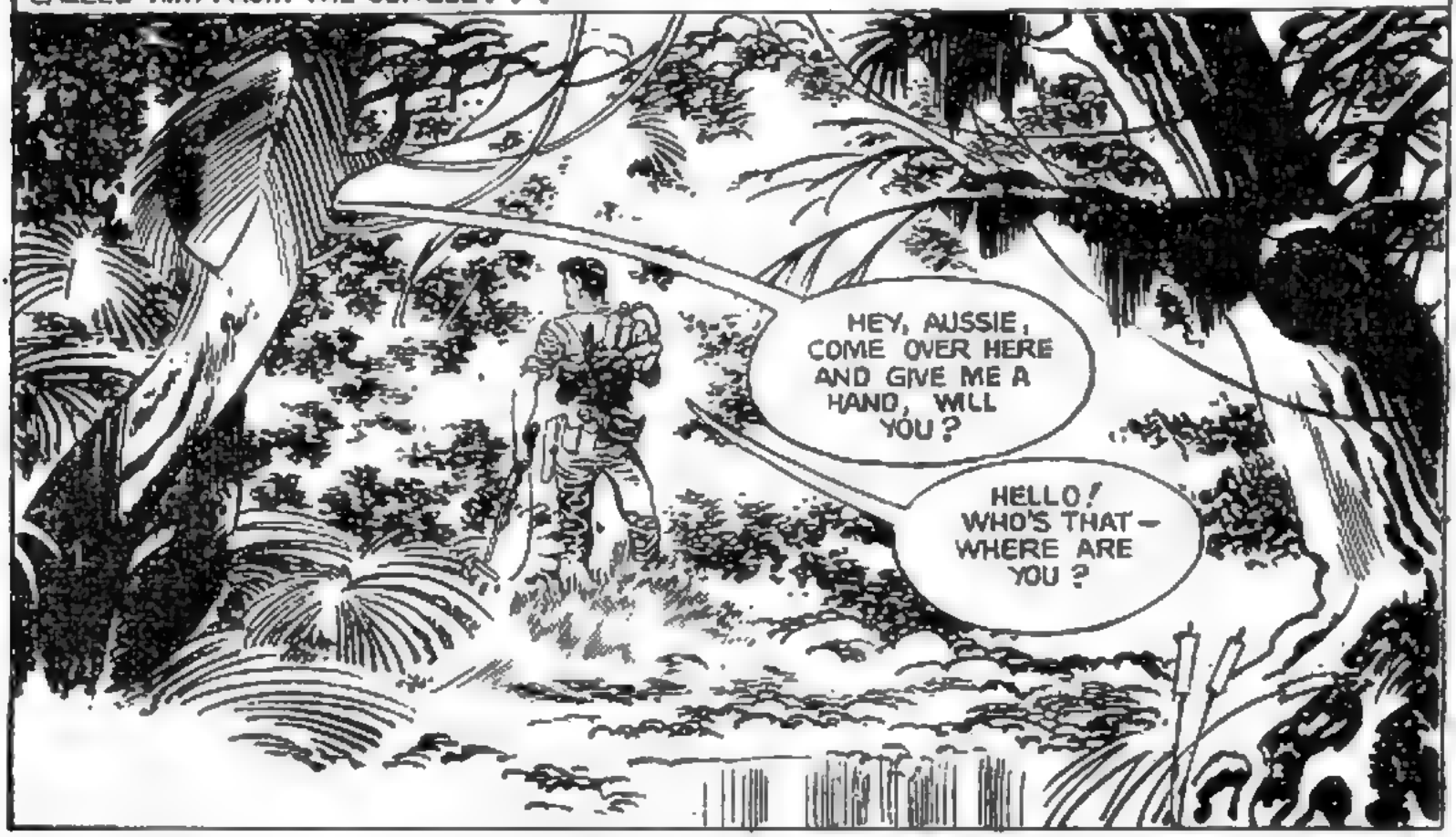
SERGEANT JARRETT LOOKED AROUND HIM, A FROWN ON HIS FACE . . .
WHERE ARE THE OTHERS ? WHAT HAPPENED, BOSETTI ?
THE JAPS OUTFLANKED US — THE LADS DIDN'T HAVE A CHANCE ! THEY'RE ALL DEAD .
AND SO WILL WE BE UNLESS WE GET OUT OF HERE — QUICK !
MAKING A WIDE DETOUR, THE FOUR SURVIVORS GOT AWAY FROM THE VICINITY OF THE CREEK WITHOUT BEING CHALLENGED . THE SEARCHING JAPS' GUNFIRE BECAME MORE SPASMODIC . THEN IT FADED IN THE DISTANCE . AT LAST, JARRETT CALLED A HALT .
HAVE A FAG — COURTESY OF THE JAPS .
SO YOU HAD TO GO LOOTING, BOSETTI, EVEN AT A MOMENT LIKE THAT !

THE STRESS OF THE LAST HOUR'S MOMENTOUS EVENTS HAD BROUGHT THE OLD ENMITY TO THE SURFACE. BUT JARRETT REGRETTED HIS WORDS AS SOON AS THEY WERE UTTERED.
SURE I HAD TO! WE'VE GOT TO BE RUTHLESS TO STAY ALIVE, HAVEN'T WE? MAYBE I OUGHT TO GIVE THIS COMPASS BACK TO THE DEAD JAP I TOOK IT FROM, EH, JARRETT?
I'M SORRY, BOSETTI. FORGET WHAT I SAID, WILL YOU? THIS COMPASS COULD BE THE SAVING OF US!

# Chapter 5. BOSETTI'S LUCK

# Loser Takes All

AFTER FILLING THE BOTTLES FROM A NEARBY STREAM, NICK HAD TO MAKE A DECIDED EFFORT OF WILL TO GET GOING AGAIN. HE HAD ONLY TAKEN ONE WEARY PACE, HOWEVER, WHEN A VOICE CALLED HIM FROM THE JUNGLE. . .




THE VOICE CALLED AGAIN AND HIS MIND FILLED WITH SUDDEN HOPE OF RELIEF FROM THIS ORDEAL, JARRETT SET OFF AT A SHAMBLING RUN TOWARDS THE SOUND. FATIGUE HAD DULLED HIS WITS — TOO LATE, HE FOUND HE HAD BEEN TRICKED . . .

HEARING THE CLATTER OF THE MACHINE-GUN AND THE SHARP CRY, BOSETTI SNATCHED UP HIS GUN AND DASHED TOWARDS THE STREAM . . .
JACK! RED! GET YOURSELVES ALONG HERE. JAPS!
A MOMENT LATER, HE CAME UPON THE SCENE OF JARRETT'S AMBUSH . . .
THEY'VE GOT JARRETT! GET A LOAD OF THIS, YOU SLIMY HEATHENS!

THE GROUP OF JAPANESE WERE FELLED IN THAT ONE LETHAL BURST AND BARNES AND WALTON JOINED BOSETTI AT THE SERGEANT'S SIDE .
IS HE — DEAD ?
NO — HE'LL LIVE ! HE'S BEEN HIT IN THE LEG . RED , KEEP A LOOKOUT . JACK , YOU GIVE ME A HAND !

WORKING AGAINST TIME , BOSETTI SPLINTED AND DRESSED THE SEMI-CONSCIOUS SERGEANT'S WOUNDED LEG WHILE BARNES SET ABOUT FASHIONING A CRUDE STRETCHER .
HURRY IT UP , MATES . THERE MUST BE MORE JAPS ABOUT !
THAT'LL HAVE TO DO FOR NOW . HOW'S IT GOING , JACK ?

FIVE MINUTES LATER. THEY WERE STUMBLING ON THEIR WAY AS FAST AS THEIR WEARY LEGS AND THE DIFFICULT TERRAIN WOULD ALLOW. BOSETTI HAD TAKEN CHARGE BY COMMON CONSENT AND AFTER AN ANXIOUS HOUR OF SEARCHING, HE FOUND A PLACE WHERE THE STREAM WAS FORDABLE . . .
ALL RIGHT . . . TAKE IT EASY NOW. MIND THAT SLIPPERY ROCK IN THE MIDDLE!

THEY HAD ONLY GONE A FEW YARDS INTO THE JUNGLE WHEN EXHAUSTION FORCED THEM TO REST AGAIN . . .
THE BULLET CRACKED YOUR SHIN BONE AND PASSED OUT THE BACK OF YOUR CALF. NICE CLEAN HOLE, BACK AND FRONT.
THANKS, BOSETTI . . .

THAT NIGHT THEY HEARD JAPS CHATTERING IN THE DISTANCE AND IT FORCED THEM INTO TORTUOUS MOVEMENT AGAIN. THREE MORE DAYS DRAGGED BY WHEN IT SEEMED THEY HAD THE JUNGLE AND THE WHOLE WORLD TO THEMSELVES. THEN . . .
LOOK! JAP BOMBERS!
THAT'S A GOOD SIGN. IT MEANS THERE'S ALLIED TROOPS SOMEWHERE UP IN FRONT!
IF ONLY WE CAN KEEP AHEAD OF THESE JAPS ON THE GROUND LONG ENOUGH . . .

WITH GROWING WEARINESS, THE AUSSIES BECAME UNWITTINGLY LESS CAREFUL. THEY LEFT TRACES ON THEIR BIVOUAC SITES — A SURE TRAIL WHICH THEIR VENGEFUL HUNTERS COULD NOT MISS.

EACH OF THEM KNEW THAT NICK'S WORDS WOULD MOST LIKELY BE TRUE, BUT THEY REBELLED AGAINST HIS SUGGESTION.

BOSETTI APPEARED TO ACCEPT THE INEVITABLE, BUT THE OTHER TWO COMPLIED WITH ANGRY RELUCTANCE.
GET MOVING. KEEP QUIET AND DON'T COME BACK. LUCK TO YER. SAY HELLO TO SYDNEY FOR ME!
LUCK, NICK.

THE MOMENT THEY WERE OUT OF JARRETT'S SIGHT, BOSETTI STOPPED AND CALLED THE OTHERS TO HIM — AND NEW HOPE CAME INTO THEIR FACES AT HIS WORDS.
LOOK, COBBERS. I'LL TRY THE DICE TRICK AGAIN ON THE JAPS. YOU WORK YOUR WAY ROUND HIS FLANK TO COVER HIM. DON'T MAKE A SOUND, ELSE HE MIGHT BLAST YER.

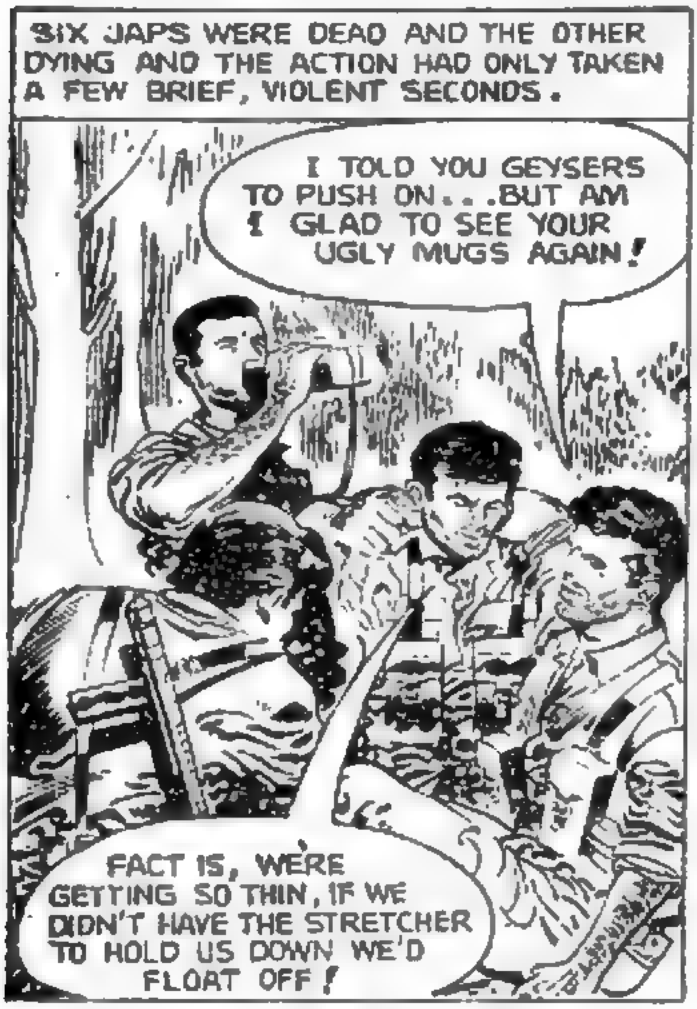
TWO HUNDRED YARDS AWAY, AN ADVANCE PARTY OF SIX JAPS AND AN N.C.O. WAS MOVING STEADILY NEARER.

PUT THAT BOTTLE AWAY. YOU MUST BE MORE ALERT. THIS IS THE TIME WHEN THE WHITE DOGS REST – AND VERY SOON NOW WE SHALL SETTLE WITH THEM, ONCE AND FOR ALL!

NICK TENSED HIMSELF, READY TO OPEN FIRE AS THE JAPS CLEARED THE TREES AND BEGAN TO SPREAD OUT. THEN HE DISTINCTLY HEARD THE CLICK OF BOSETTI'S DICE AND HIS FACE BROKE INTO A RELUCTANT GRIN – THE JAPS HALTED CONFUSEDLY IN THE OPEN . . .

SO THAT STUBBORN ITALIAN IS STILL AROUND . . . I MIGHT HAVE KNOWN IT.

WITH HEART STOPPING SUDDENNESS, NICK OPENED FIRE. PANNING HIS MACHINE-GUN ROUND WITH ALL THE OLD SKILL, HE ACCOUNTED FOR THE FIRST THREE JAPS AND WOUNDED ANOTHER.
BARNES AND WALTON MADE NO MISTAKE WITH THE OTHERS.


SIX JAPS WERE DEAD AND THE OTHER DYING AND THE ACTION HAD ONLY TAKEN A FEW BRIEF, VIOLENT SECONDS.
I TOLD YOU GEYSERS TO PUSH ON...BUT AM I GLAD TO SEE YOUR UGLY MUGS AGAIN!
FACT IS, WE'RE GETTING SO THIN, IF WE DIDN'T HAVE THE STRETCHER TO HOLD US DOWN WE'D FLOAT OFF!

THE SHARP VICTORY GAVE THEIR FLAGGING SPIRITS A BOOST AND THEY WERE ABLE TO COVER A FEW MORE MILES BEFORE EVENING. WHILE JACK AND RED TOOK FIRST WATCH, LU BOSETTI SETTLED DOWN BESIDE THE SERGEANT...
SEE HERE, BOSETTI. I STILL MAY NOT MAKE IT BACK TO BASE. COULD YOU BRING YOURSELF TO TELL ME HOW MY KID BROTHER, JOE, CAME TO BE FISHED OUT OF THE HARBOUR, KILLED WITH A KNIFE?
SURE, JARRETT. I GUESS I OWE IT TO YOU, AFTER WHAT WE'VE BEEN THROUGH TOGETHER...

IT WASN'T INTENTIONAL . . . HE WAS A NEW FACE, A ROOKY COP IN PLAIN CLOTHES. MY BOYS WERE HAVING A RUCKUS WITH THAT SICILIAN MOB FROM SHANTY TOWN. SOMEHOW HE GOT MIXED IN WITH THEM. NOBODY KNEW WHO ACTUALLY STABBED HIM.
AND AFTERWARDS, THEY GOT COLD FEET AND SHOVED HIM IN THE DRINK.
YEAH! THAT'S THE WAY IT WAS, JARRETT. YOU KNOW YOURSELF. NO KID FROM THE WATER-FRONT COULD AFFORD TO GET MIXED UP WITH A STABBING. HE WOULDN'T STAND A CHANCE WITH THE LAW — WE WERE ALWAYS GUILTY BEFORE ANY CRIME WAS EVEN COMMITTED.
MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT, BOSETTI — MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT!

THE OTHER TWO AUSSIES WERE QUICK TO NOTICE AND APPROVE THE NEW RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEIR SERGEANT AND BOSETTI. NO BOND OF FRIENDSHIP WAS EVER STRONGER THAN THE ONE FORGED BETWEEN THOSE FOUR AS THEY STRUGGLED ON AT A SNAIL'S PACE TOWARDS THE RETREATING MAIN BODY OF THE AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCES.

HEY, LOOK! THAT'S THE ENGINEERS BLOWIN' UP THE ROAD TO HALT THE NIPS. WE'VE NEARLY MADE IT!

THEY STAGGERED FORWARD AGAIN, ON THE LAST LAP AND IT WAS ONLY THEIR INDOMITABLE WILL POWER THAT KEPT THEIR LEGS FROM BUCKLING UNDER THEM. THEY WERE WITHIN SIGHT OF THE AUSSIE OUTPOSTS WHEN FATE DEALT THEM A LAST CRUEL BLOW...

LOOK OUT, COBBERS! JAPS BEHIND YOU!

ONE ALERT JAP, AHEAD OF THE OTHERS, SPOTTED THE FOUR AND IMMEDIATELY FIRED ON THEM. BOSETTI WAS THE ONLY ONE OF THEM WHO REACTED TO THE WARNING. ALTHOUGH ALMOST OUT ON HIS FEET, HE STAGGERED A COUPLE OF STEPS SIDEWAYS AND HIS GUN STAMMERED INTO LIFE.
CLICK

THE JAP ATTACK WAS REPULSED WITH HEAVY LOSSES ALMOST AS SOON AS IT BEGAN. BUT FOR NICK JARRETT, THE ISSUE DID NOT SEEM TO MATTER EITHER WAY. LUCKY LU BOSETTI WOULD NEVER BOSS THE SYDNEY WATERFRONT AGAIN . . .
LUCKY LU THEY CALLED HIM BUT HE HIMSELF THREW HIS LUCK AWAY AT THE END — AND ALL FOR A COP!

THAT WAS THE STORY RED WALTON TOLD THE TWO SAILORS AND IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT IT HAD MOVED THEM DEEPLY. THEY TURNED CURIOUSLY AS A LONELY FIGURE ON A CRUTCH HOBBLED TOWARDS THE STERN OF THE BOAT . . . IT WAS SERGEANT NICK JARRETT.
WELL, THAT'S ABOUT ALL REALLY. PRETTY SOON WE REACHED THE BEACH, AND THEY TOLD US TO COME ABOARD THIS SHIP — LIKE YOU KNOW.
WHAT A STORY! I SUPPOSE THAT PAIR OF DICE WILL BE ABOUT ALL MA BOSETTI WILL GET IN THE WAY OF PERSONAL EFFECTS.
HMS
HMS

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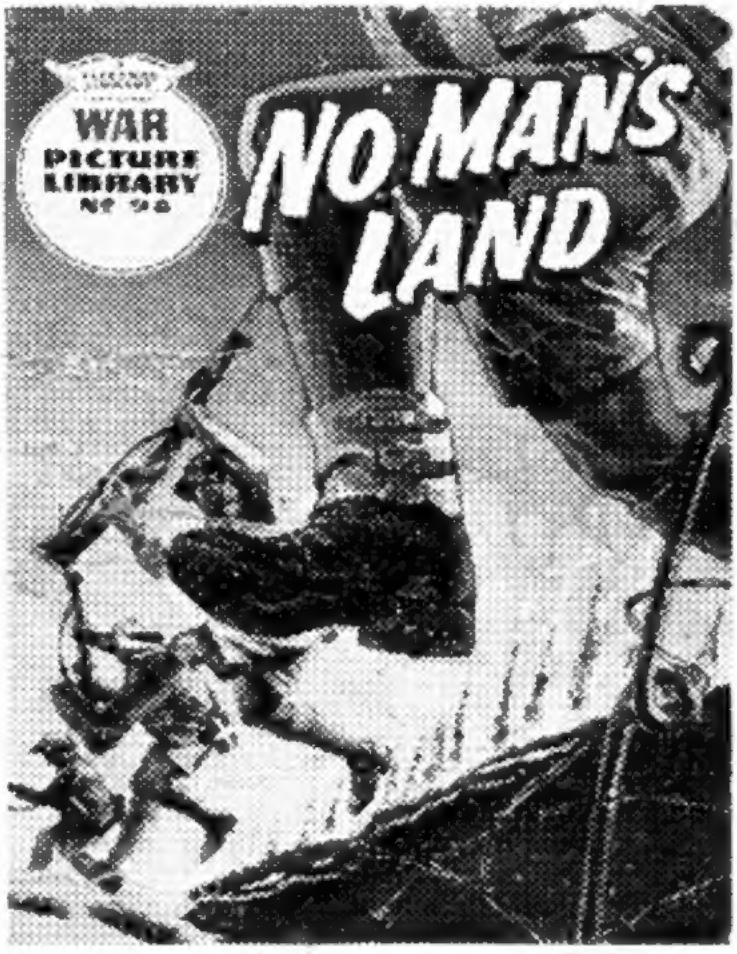


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